

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

MAY 14, 2013

Proclaim May 2013 as “Mental Health Awareness Month”

Today, tens of millions of Americans are living with the burden of a mental health problem. They shoulder conditions like depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress and bipolar disorder, and other debilitating illnesses that can strain every part of a person's life. Mental illness affects one in five Americans every year, and co-occurrence of mental illness and substance abuse is a significant concern that requires integrated mental health treatment.

Even though assistance is available, less than half of children and adults with diagnosable mental health problems receive treatment. It is crucial that men, women, youths, and children who suffer from mental illness access care. Los Angeles County (“County”) employees from all departments should be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues and make the appropriate referrals for assistance. Shame and stigma too often prevent individuals and families from accessing mental health care, and efforts to de-stigmatize mental health treatment must be increased.

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MOTION

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The County has made a commitment to community-based systems of mental health care for all residents. Mental health is a fundamental component of general health and is indispensable to personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and societal interactions. While mental health problems remain a serious public health concern, together with community-based treatment providers, the County is making progress.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) will expand mental health and substance use disorder benefits and Federal parity protections for 62 million Americans. For the first time, the health care law will prevent insurers from denying coverage because of a pre-existing condition. The ACA already requires new health plans to cover recommended preventive services like depression screening and behavioral assessments for children at no extra cost to patients.

The Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health have joined together to raise awareness and broaden understanding of mental health and mental illness during the month of May. A series of educational and entertaining events will occur throughout Los Angeles County, hosted by County clinics and contract agencies.

Mental Health Awareness has been celebrated since 1949, but President Obama is the first President to proclaim May as Mental Health Awareness Month. The President recognized that mental health conditions are real and prevalent throughout the United

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States, and that all Americans experience times of difficulty and stress. Individuals who suffer from mental illness and receive effective treatment can recover and lead full and productive lives. In following the President's proclamation, the County should support the national effort to create awareness and access to mental health services.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Proclaim the month of May 2013 as Mental Health Awareness Month throughout Los Angeles County and call upon Los Angeles County employees, residents, government agencies, organizations, health care providers, and research institutions to raise mental health awareness and continue helping Americans live longer, healthier and productive lives.

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